

Shivim Panin – Melton Scholar’s Curriculum
Sefer Shmot
Unit 9 – “Manna From Heaven”
Plus “From Manna to Hag haShavuot”
May 23, 2012

- A) Sefer Shmot chapter 16, verses 1 – 36
- 1) Verse 1 – Approximately how much time has passed since the Exodus from Egypt?
 - 2) Verse 2 – Upon which two earlier occasions since the Exodus have the Israelites grumbled against God and/or Moshe?
 - 3) Verse 3 – What issues or issues are aroused by this verse? In other words, what is said by the Israelites that you might not have expected them to say?
 - What have we learned in the past that directly contradicts what the Israelites say here?
 - How might we deal with these issues?
 - 4) Verse 4 – What according to this verse is the nature of the test?
 - Why is such a thing considered to be a test?
 - 5) Verse 5 – What is implied but not explicitly written by this verse?
 - Have the Israelites heard beforehand any commands or information about the Shabat?
 - 6) Verses 6 – 8 – Why would Moshe think that the people think that it was not the Lord who brought them out of Egypt?
 - Note that the food that will be provided them will not only be in order to deal with their physical hunger but will also teach a religious message.
 - 7) Verse 10 – In what two earlier instances since the Exodus have we encountered this Divine cloud?
 - If the Divine cloud has already been present, what might be remarkable in the appearance now of the Presence of the Lord?
 - 8) Verse 15 – “What is it? מַן הוּא; our translation understands this as a question, which is very plausible but not completely certain.
 - 9) Verses 16 – 20 – What two unique qualities are attributed to the manna?
 - Why would God give it these qualities? What is the manna meant to teach? Why would someone leave some left over at night?
 - 10) Verse 22 – What do you think actually happened according to the first half of the verse?
 - Why do you think that the chieftains came running to Moshe?
 - 11) Verse 23 – Is baked and boiled manna put aside for the next day, or is it the raw manna that is put aside for the next day?
 - 12) Verses 23 – 26 – What pedagogical methodology is Moshe employing with the people? What might we learn from this methodology?
 - Do you think that there might be any connection between the general message of the manna on the one hand, and the matter of shabat on the other hand?
- B) The meaning of the manna
- 1) Commentary number 11 – Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yoma page 76a
- C) Manna as an interim measure, superseded by the agriculture of the Land of Israel
- 1) Sefer Devarim chapter 8, verses 2 – 18
- D) Connection between the manna and natural agriculture on the one hand, and different approaches to Torah on the other hand
- 1) Background concerning what the Torah tells us and does not tell us about Hag haShavuot (Shmot and Bmidbar)
 - 2) Sefer Vayikra chapter 23, verses 9 – 12, 15 – 17, 21
 - a) Straightforward meaning of the verses
 - (I) The verse says to hold a celebration but the holiday has no name
 - (II) Although the other holidays in this chapter are given calendar dates, this holiday does not have calendar dates, rather it is to take place at the end of the counting of seven

weeks. The counting is to begin the day that you bring the first sheaf of the year's harvest to the priest. That day is to be the "day after the Sabbath"

(III) All we are told about the holiday is that on it one is to bring an offering of "new grain" in the form of "two loaves of bread" which is called the "bread of first fruits"

b) Background

(I) The barley harvest took place in mid spring around the time of Passover

(II) Barley was not considered to be for human consumption but rather only for livestock

(III) The wheat was the first crop of the agricultural year for human consumption

(IV) The wheat usually ripened fully about 7 weeks after the barley

c) Conclusions

(I) It appears that this holiday has no calendar date but is to be celebrated the day after the conclusion of the counting of 7 weeks from the beginning of the barley harvest

(II) The meaning of the holiday seems to be purely agricultural; a celebration of the beginning of the harvest that is for human consumption

3) Rabbinic tradition; the Oral Law/ Oral Torah

a) Looming questions that the Oral Torah grapples with

(I) What is the meaning of the "day after the Sabbath"?

(II) Could it really be that the date of this holiday actually is not tied to a particular date on the calendar, while the other 4 biblical holidays (Passover, Succot, Rosh haShana, Yom Kipur) all have calendar dates?

(III) Could it really be that this holiday has only agricultural meaning and no historical meaning while the other two pilgrimage festivals (Passover and Succot) have both agricultural and historical significance?

b) Facts and conclusions noted by the Oral Law

(I) There is biblical precedent for the word "shabat" to be used in the sense of "holiday"

- Leviticus chapter 23, verse 32

(II) The holiday mentioned in this passage immediately prior to the mention of the "day after the Shabbat" is Passover

(III) If the "day after the Shabbat" is interpreted as the day after Passover, then our holiday of Shavuot will fall every year on the same calendar day

(IV) The date of the holiday will then be the 6th day of the month of Sivan, the third month of the year

4) Exodus chapter 19, verses 1 – 3, 7 – 11; chapter 20, verse 1

a) Unclear what day of this third month was the Torah given; somewhere between the 4th day and the 7th day

5) Rabbinic tradition concluded that this cannot have been a coincidence

a) Shavuot is the holiday of the giving of the Torah

b) The Torah intentionally did not make this explicit but left it to the recipients of the Torah to discover

c) This teaches that the very meaning of Torah is only revealed through the active search of the Jewish People, the interaction of the Jewish People with the Torah

d) In general the meaning of Torah is often non explicit but rather to a certain degree open-ended

e) Its meaning is fleshed out by the Jewish People, that is, through a partnership, a covenant, between the Divine and the human

f) This holiday therefore celebrates both the Written Torah and its active interpretation by the Jewish People, what we call the Oral Torah

6) Seder Eliahu Zuta chapter, chapter 2

a) Manna, the state in which everything comes from God, is like the flax and wheat as understood by the foolish servant

b) The agricultural produce of the Land of Israel, created through a partnership between man and God, is like the bread and tablecloth of the wise servant